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# 1

## On the Intersection of Personal and Social Identities: Introduction and Evidence from a Longitudinal Study of Emerging Adults

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### Abstract

*Identity is a central focus of research in the social sciences, national and international politics, and everyday discourse. This volume brings together an interdisciplinary set of social scientists who study personal and social identity. The chapters span childhood through emerging adulthood. This chapter introduces*

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Our longitudinal study of diverse emerging adults' college pathways was funded by grants from the Academic Senate and Social Sciences Division of the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), UC-ACCORD and UC-LMRI, and the Spencer Foundation. We are grateful to the university's Educational Opportunity Programs and admissions office for help with recruiting participants and William Ladusaw, the provosts of the ten colleges at UCSC, and Mary Ann Dewey from UCSC's public information office for help locating participants during and after their time at UCSC. We thank Catherine R. Cooper, Lene Jensen, and Avril Thorne for providing insightful feedback on earlier versions of the chapter and all the colleagues and students who helped with the research and who have patiently listened to the ideas that helped frame this volume and our research.

*the three goals of the volume: (1) illustrating how the study of identity development is enriched by an interdisciplinary approach, (2) providing a rich developmental picture of personal and social identity development, and (3) examining the intersections of multiple identities. We illustrate these three goals with brief descriptions of how they are addressed in the other chapters in the volume. This chapter also highlights the three goals of the study with data from our ongoing longitudinal study of diverse emerging adults' college pathways. © Wiley Periodicals, Inc.*

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
“Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king,  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

**R**ichard Cory. Silvia Plath. Edgar Allan Poe. Virginia Woolf. Anne Sexton. Ernest Hemingway. Adolescents or emerging adults who are on suicide watch at the local mental health facility or, like Richard Cory, appeared to all their family, friends, and teachers to have everything going for them and yet were found dead, with only a note left behind (or not) about why they could not go on. The war veterans who come home but are lost because after the atrocities they have seen or done in the name of their country, religion, or any group that is part of their identity, home no longer is home. The list could go on, but this inability to see one's past, present, and future as coherent and meaningful was what sparked Erik Erikson's interest in identity development, his greatest life and scholarly passion.

When Erikson started writing about identity as a result of trying to help World War II veterans recover their sense of self through crafting a life story that integrated the past, present and future, the current clinical name for this incoherence of the self, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), had not been invented. Subsequently Erikson traveled to California to study the Sioux and other Native American nations. In his interviews with parents

and grandparents, Erikson discovered a similar issue of incoherence of self in the children of these nations and theorized that this incoherence was in large part due to the U.S. government's practice of sending children to boarding schools where they were essentially cut off from their cultural roots. When these children rejoined their families, they had become different people who no longer felt at home in their community and often had not found home at the boarding school either. Today Erikson's ideas about the basic human need for self-coherence and the association between coherence and mental health are still timely and the focus of many scholarly and applied endeavors, as is his unwavering interest in examining how cultural communities either constrain or facilitate self-exploration.

Since Erikson's landmark book, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968), on the uses and misuses of the term *identity* in psychology, the general public, and various cultural institutions, developmental psychologists have theorized and researched the various meanings of personal identity in children, adolescents, and, more recently, adults. Increased globalization has made identity development even more challenging. Currently, children, adolescents, and adults in even the most remote corners of the world have instant access to media. Thus, the boundaries and contexts for identity development have been broadened to include multiple choices and pathways through development. With choices, however, often comes confusion, making identity crafting more challenging. Fortunately, cultural communities, families, peers, and schools set up scaffolds to guide identity exploration toward the goals, values, beliefs, and practices associated with mature identities in their communities. Still, some confusion is bound to occur as young children and adults move toward a more mature understanding of their role in their communities and in the larger, and at times very different, globalized world that children, adolescents, and emerging adults find themselves in.

One such confusion is whether a person's unique, or personal, self develops in connection with his or her sense of belonging to a group or collective (social) identity. The intersection of personal and social identities is receiving increasing attention in a variety of disciplines: education, sociology, and developmental, personality, and social psychology. In developmental psychology, for example, the study of personal identity has been dominated by Eriksonian (1968) and neo-Eriksonian approaches, and in particular, Marcia's identity status model. (Erikson did not use the term *personal identity* in his writings. He would also have disagreed with Tajfel's (1981) proposal that personal and social identities are separable. See Cooper, Behrens, & Trinh, in press.)

More recently, autobiographical narrative approaches, which are rooted in personality psychology (McAdams, 2001; Thorne, 2004), have begun to capture the dynamic instantiations of adolescents' and adults' identities. Both approaches are consistent with Erikson's proposal that personal identity is an individual project that engages with historical, cultural, and social contexts and practices (see also Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Thorne, 2004). Following Erikson, both approaches posit that the optimal developmental

outcome for adolescents and adults is to achieve a sense of coherence that integrates their multiple identifications across contexts and time. This conceptualization does not preclude variations in the contextual salience of identity, but it does suggest that individuals will have a sense of “me-ness” or continuity across various contexts.

In contrast, variations in identity across different contexts have been the primary focus of social psychologists. Influenced by social identity theory (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), social psychologists have examined social identity rather than personal identity, defined by Tajfel (1981) as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 63). Therefore, as opposed to a unique, individual sense of “me-ness” that defines personal identity, social identity involves collective, group-level identification that represents a sense of “we-ness” (Ruble et al., 2004). (For a more extensive review of Tajfel’s social identity theory, see Hurtado and Silva, Chapter Two.)

To date, researchers have typically investigated personal and social identities in relative isolation. However, there have recently been attempts to link together personal and social identities (see, for example, Deaux & Perkins, 2001; Phinney, 1990; Fuligni & Flook, 2005; Ruble et al., 2004). Deaux and Perkins (2001) used the metaphor of a kaleidoscope to illustrate how the fluidity and salience of individuals’ personal, social, and relational identities depend on the situational context and provide multiple lenses for interpreting their experiences. The addition of the relational self—the everyday roles and dyadic relationships through which individuals enact and create their personal and social identities—to the kaleidoscope provides the added benefit of examining the inherent status hierarchies embedded in most roles and relationships and allows the investigation of how these hierarchies inform individuals’ personal and social identities in their everyday lives. Unfortunately, although Deaux and Perkins’s model provides a powerful metaphor that links personal and social identities, it has not been elaborated in sufficient detail to be tested empirically. As Thorne (2004) noted, “One of the biggest challenges for identity research is to achieve a dynamic and contextualized understanding of how senses of self are continuous *and* changing, and how personal *and* community beliefs and practices intertwine in identity making” (p. 5).

In this volume, we bring together identity scholars from multiple disciplines who offer new insights into the development of personal and social identities. As Jean Phinney suggests in her commentary on the contributions to this volume (Chapter Seven), we recognize that much work will be required to create a truly interdisciplinary approach to the study of identity development.

The three overarching goals of this volume are to (1) illustrate how the study of identity development is enriched by an interdisciplinary approach, (2) provide a rich developmental perspective or story about personal and social identity from childhood to emerging adulthood, and (3) examine the

intersections of multiple identities. The chapters focus on the development of gender, ethnicity, and social class identities because these three social identities stratify most cultural communities. The chapter authors also address, to varying extents, how societal institutions—family, peers, schools, and media—contour the development of personal and social identities and shape educational and work/career trajectories. Phinney discusses whether and how each chapter addresses the three goals and suggests important directions for future research. To not steal her thunder, we will not foreshadow her ideas in this introduction.

In this first chapter, we elaborate on the three goals of the volume in two ways. First, as we discuss each goal, we provide illustrations of how the chapter authors address each theme. Second, to provide a more in-depth analysis of each goal, we show how it framed our four-year longitudinal study of ethnically and socioeconomically diverse emerging adults' transition to and pathways through college. Our longitudinal study was initially motivated by our desire to help understand shared and unique experiences of students who are well represented (such as those of European and Asian heritage) and underrepresented (those of Chicano/Latino, African, Pacific Islander, and Native American heritage) in the undergraduate student body of the University of California (UC), and more specifically, our own campus: University of California at Santa Cruz. We also included a group of first-generation, low-income, European-heritage students to attempt to uncouple the roles of social class and ethnicity in our participants' college pathways.

In addition to our scholarly interest in this group of college students, we were motivated by the practical goal of increasing retention of these underrepresented students at UC. Thus, we worked closely with campus centers and organizations that serve these populations and routinely informed them of our emerging findings so they could make our campus friendlier to their constituents. As the study progressed, identity development began to take a more central role in our scholarly and practical interests because our participants' college narratives were not only about adapting to and managing academics and social activities at the campus. As participants progressed through their four or more years toward graduation, they were creating identity narratives that integrated their past, present, and future values, beliefs, goals, and cultural practices.

## The Goals of the Volume

We now turn to how the authors and our work addressed the three goals of the volume: interdisciplinarity, identity development, and the intersections or connections between identities.

**Interdisciplinarity in the Study of Personal and Social Identity.** Like other disciplines, developmental psychology has benefited from interdisciplinary and postmodern approaches to identity theory and research. Following Marxist and feminist theorists' ideas about positioning (Harding, 2004), as

well as the ideas of Bourdieu (1977) and Coleman (1988) about the role of social capital in educational and career opportunities, developmental psychologists have increasingly recognized that because of their gender, ethnicity, and social class, some children, adolescents, and emerging adults have more opportunities than others to explore and construct their educational and career identities. These stratifying demographic categories also influence these groups' ideas about relationships and their political and moral ideologies. Thus, as sociologists and social psychologists have long argued, these social identities should be included in theory and research on personal identity development. As the chapters in this volume illustrate, scholars focused on social identity development would also benefit from attention to personal identity development.

The chapter authors illustrate how drawing on a variety of disciplinary theories can increase our understanding of identity development. In addition to their theoretical plurality, the interdisciplinary approach of the contributors is evident in their research methods. Because the intersection of personal and social identities is complex and multifaceted, the methods used are necessarily diverse, making use of quantitative, interview, narrative, ethnographic, focus group, and content-analytic approaches. In particular, Aida Hurtado and Janelle Silva (Chapter Two, social psychologists and feminist scholars), Leah Lurye, Kristina Zosuls, and Diane Ruble (Chapter Three, developmental and social psychologists), Lyn Mikel Brown and Mark Tappan (Chapter Four, developmental and educational psychologists), Niobe Way, Carlos Santos, Erika Niwa, and Constance Kim-Gervey (Chapter Five, developmental psychologists), Mark Orbe (Chapter Six, a sociologist), and Jean Phinney (Chapter Seven, a developmental psychologist) drew on theory and research in social and developmental psychology, sociology, education, anthropology, feminist studies, and philosophy to create their conceptual frameworks and formulate their theoretical proposals, research questions, and data analyses. Except for Lurye, Zosuls, and Ruble, who used a quantitative approach, the contributors to this volume privileged qualitative methods in their analysis of personal and social identities. However, an examination of the authors' published works shows that depending on their particular theoretical issue or research questions, they move fluidly through a variety of methods and data analytic techniques.

*Interdisciplinarity in Our Own Research.* Our longitudinal study recruited 175 ethnically and socioeconomically diverse women and men who entered our University of California's campus in fall 2002. The approximately 100 students who remained at the university until their senior year (2006) are the focus of this chapter. Our project drew heavily from theories and methods in social psychology, education, feminist theory, and sociology. Our conception of personal identity was greatly influenced by Cooper's (1999) interdisciplinary bridging multiple worlds theory, which emphasizes identity negotiation among young people's salient personal contexts or worlds, such as families, peers, schools, and communities, and how these

worlds can serve as both resources and challenges for their identity formation and career pathways. The first-generation participants—students who were the first in their families to attend college—often poignantly illustrated these resources and constraints in our longitudinal study. For example, many talked about attending underresourced public schools in dangerous neighborhoods and persisting in school despite many obstacles to fulfill their parents' dreams that their children would go to college and escape poverty. What they lacked in family academic credentials, or human capital, they often made up in emotional support from family, friends, and, for some, teachers and community- and school-based organizations. (Human capital is conceptualized in our research as parents' educational level and their families' familiarity with U.S. schools, requirements for university admission, and generally U.S. universities and college degrees.) A few students, however, saw themselves as their most important source of capital for negotiating and navigating college, identity, and their futures (see also Cooper, Cooper, Azmitia, Chavira, & Gullat, 2002).

We used social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and standpoint theory (Harding, 2004) to explore how our participants negotiated their gender, ethnic, and social class identities within the multiple contexts of personal identity. We were especially interested in whether and how they came to understand how these social identities positioned them in college and in the broader society. For example, many of the participants who had at least one subordinate identity (for example, female, ethnic minority, or poor or working class) were surprised to encounter prejudice and racism at the university, a place they had always equated with democratic policies and beliefs. Dominant group members, in contrast, often disclosed the guilt or powerlessness they felt when they first encountered notions of privilege in their university classrooms or in interactions with peers. As they went through college, subordinate- and dominant-group emerging adults attempted to understand each other's positioning—where the "other" was coming from—and how this positioning informed their own identity negotiations and development. We would argue that our participants' willingness to work to understand their own and others' positioning helped them recognize and articulate connections between their personal and social identities and construct increasingly coherent identity narratives.

**Personal and Social Identity Development from Childhood to Emerging Adulthood.** Although Erikson (1968) argued that identity development is a lifelong project that begins in infancy, theory and research on identity development have typically been located in adolescence. Recently Arnett (2004) and many others have highlighted the dramatic changes that have taken place in adolescents' and adults' lives in many postindustrial communities. As a result, they have made a compelling case that the negotiation of identity extends beyond adolescence and into emerging adulthood, a transitional phase between adolescence and young adulthood. At the same time, others (Quintana, 2007; Ruble et al., 2004) have highlighted

the importance of identity formation in childhood. Accordingly, this volume includes work that spans early childhood through emerging adulthood. In this way, we hope to highlight similarities and differences in identity formation across developmental periods.

As the chapter authors argue, although gender, ethnicity, and social class are integral parts of people's lives, the salience and centrality of these social identities vary as a function of period of development (childhood, adolescence, or emerging adulthood) and the life contexts they inhabit. Following Tajfel and Turner (1986), several researchers have shown that individuals who occupy less privileged positions in their cultural communities by virtue of their demographic group memberships, women, people of color, and the working class or poor in the United States and other nations are more aware of their social identities than individuals who occupy more privileged positions (for example, white middle- or upper-class males). The heightened awareness or salience of these social identities is fueled by experiences of discrimination and socially imposed constraints in their daily lives. Yet the research also shows that being a member of these groups (for example, being female) does not automatically imply that a particular social identity is meaningful to the child, adolescent, or emerging adult (see also Chapters Two and Three). Still, because identities are created and negotiated in social contexts, others may impose identities on individuals based on assumptions concerning the salience or centrality of that identity for the individual (see also Chapters Four through Six). The interesting developmental questions then become: When and how do these social identities develop? What accounts for between- and within-group variation in the centrality of these social identities in children's, adolescents', and emerging adults' identity projects? When and how do individuals begin to link their social and their personal identities? Do they perceive these linkages as kaleidoscopic lenses or positions for negotiating their lives? We asked the chapter authors to grapple with these four questions as they wrote their chapters.

We also asked the chapter authors to consider how personal and social identities are socialized, created, and performed in relational and institutional contexts such as family, peers, schools, and media. Way, Santos, Niwa, and Kim-Gervey (Chapter Five) and Orbe (Chapter Six) highlight the role of family, peers, and schools in personal and social identity development. As Hurtado and Silva (Chapter Two) and Brown and Tappan (Chapter Four) remind us, media also exert a powerful influence on identity negotiations. Yet as Lurye, Zosuls, and Ruble (Chapter Three) caution, families, peers, schools, media, and, more broadly, cultural communities exert their influence through individuals' personal identity lenses, and these lenses can lead to individual differences in identity constructions, with implications for adjustment and mental health.

*Personal and Social Identity Development in Our Own Research.* We now show how our longitudinal study of diverse emerging adults' college pathways addressed the four developmental questions we asked contributors to ponder in the context of family, peer, and institutional (college) worlds. Using exam-

ples from the participants' interviews, we highlight how emerging adults' social identities contextualized our participants' educational trajectories and career identities, two domains of personal identity development. We draw attention to the processes of identity negotiation, including the triggers and personal characteristics that either enhanced or hindered the salience, centrality, and integration of our participants' social and personal identities. Although we included narratives from a broad range of participants, we pay special attention to the stories of first-generation college students because they experienced the most discontinuities between their precollege and college lives (see also Chapter Six), and these discontinuities often served as potential triggers for personal and social identity development.

During their first year of college, our participants varied in the extent to which they had formulated career goals and could articulate their motivation for attending college. They also varied in the salience and centrality of their gender, ethnic, and social class identities for interpreting the academic and social experiences they were encountering as they began and adjusted to college life. Although students who were members of subordinate groups (ethnic minorities, females, and poor and working-class students) were more likely to mention these social identities, many denied that these identities played a role in their major or career choices. For example, Rose, a working-class Chinese American student, stated that ethnicity was not related to her career choices because "I just never let it get to me, I never really thought of ethnicity as a big deal. We're all people, human beings." She had similar feelings about gender and social class. This denial that social identities mattered for a domain of personal identity, career, may have occurred at least in part because first-year students generally viewed college as an equalizer that would erase their disadvantaged status in society.

As they experienced college, however, first-generation students began to understand that college reproduced the inequalities in the larger society and that these social identities would contour their experiences and choices throughout their lives (see Chapter Two). For many, this understanding led to an increased salience and centrality of gender, ethnicity, or class in their identity narratives and career pathways. For example, although she expressed similar ideas to Rose in the fall quarter of her first year, the winter and spring quarter interviews showed that Ana, a working-class Latina, was beginning to see connections among her ethnicity, career, and, more broadly, her life. Taking a course in American studies appears to have triggered this awareness: "It's like, about race and just seeing the world totally different, and like, books that like, I read in high school and now that I read here, I was like, 'Whoa; it's totally different!' Like, you totally get a different meaning to it." Taking this course also seems to have been the catalyst in her change of major and career, although she gave her personal dislike of chemistry as her primary reason for switching her major from chemistry to sociology.

Our participants' sophomore year interviews revealed a gradual increase in making connections among personal (career) and social identities.

However, many still struggled with the tension between viewing their choices exclusively as self-determined and recognizing that these choices were influenced at least in part by their gender, ethnic, and social class. In Ana's sophomore year, for example, sociology remained her major because "I really like it. I like the concepts. I took a class and now it's just like, you know what this is what I want to do. . . . I'm not really thinking about 'I'm a minority, I want to study this for minorities.'" Yet in a subsequent section of this narrative, she stated that her ethnicity had influenced her goal of becoming a lawyer because "just me being a minority, there isn't that many minorities that are lawyers."

For a handful of sophomores, however, their college experiences, choice of majors, and social identities were intimately connected and viewed as microcosms of how U.S. society marks gender, ethnicity, social class, and other social identities. Robert, a working-class African American student from an inner-city neighborhood who was the only one of his friends who attended college, repeatedly stressed how he viewed his college experiences from his ethnic, gender, and class positions because "society just puts you in a box. . . . If I were to forget that I was Black one day, I would always be reminded every time I, like, step outside, get on the bus, and [am] like, kinda a spectacle all the time. . . . It's hard to decipher whether a girl is looking at you because she likes you or because you are Black." Robert also explained that he had majored in economics because this major was both interesting to him and would allow him to have a career that paid enough for him to help his family and community. Yet he stated that he was finding it increasingly difficult to visit his family and friends as he created an upwardly mobile, college student identity because neither his friends nor his family understood his college experiences (see also Chapter Six). Despite these challenges, his interviews showed that his commitment to his family, friends, and community never wavered from his first through his senior years.

Like Erikson (1968), social scientists have suggested that particular experiences may serve as triggers (Phinney, 2003) or encounters (Cross, 1995) that prompt identity exploration and renegotiation (see also Chapter Two). Narrative life story theorists have suggested that the processes through which individuals make meaning of their experiences also play a role in the extent to which identities are explored, negotiated, and renegotiated (Thorne, 2004). The relation between people's experiences and social and personal identity development is bidirectional in that experiences and opportunities help create particular identities and particular identities will seek out or be afforded particular experiences and opportunities. It is important to note that these triggers are not universally applicable; for example, finding that one is a numerical minority on the college campus, experiencing racism or discrimination from a peer or a professor, or traveling to one's ancestral culture will not prompt identity work for everyone. The same or similar experiences can have different effects on different people, and this differential impact may be related to their current construction of their social or personal identity, including their personality traits, motives, and concerns.

In our longitudinal study, we found that consistent with prior research, experiences of racism and discrimination were especially powerful triggers for identity work. Our participants were often unsettled by these experiences and discussed them with their friends and family as they tried to make sense of them. Of course, triggers for identity development were not limited to experiences of prejudice. For example, in his senior-year interview, Robert stated that his participation in Rainbow Theater (a multicultural, multiethnic theater group on campus) had affirmed his pride in his African American and working-class heritage and promoted an understanding of and tolerance for other groups. Our key point is that the college context offers a wide array of potential experiences that may cause emerging adults to rethink their identities and reconfigure them in new ways.

University courses frequently served as consciousness-raising experiences for our participants (see also Chapter Two), including students from privileged groups who were confronting issues of privilege and subordination for the first time. For some, the increased salience of their privileged gender, ethnicity, or class position not only triggered identity work but also prompted them to become involved in activities such as pro-immigration rallies, labor strikes, the annual take-back-the-night march, and on-campus and community organizations working for social change.

Interactions with peers outside the classroom also triggered identity work, particularly for college students living away from home. Rose's senior-year interview was characterized by an increased salience and centrality of her ethnic (Chinese) identity following a quarter studying abroad in Hong Kong, where she met a Chinese American student who was actively involved with her ethnicity. This trip to Hong Kong was clearly a turning point for her ethnic identity, and identity development in general. In describing her behavior since she returned, Rose said: "[I'm more] aware of my own ethnicity. Aware of if something goes on or someone says something to me, I'm like 'oh, maybe they said it because I'm Asian.' Like, well, my first couple weeks coming back, over the summer when I came back, a lot of my friends noticed that I made more racial remarks, racial comments."

Rose's description of her behavior is illustrative of what we have previously referred to as an ethnic lens (Syed & Azmitia, in press), such that she now views events and experiences in terms of her ethnicity, a behavior that we found corresponds to a greater identification with one's ethnic group (see also Cross, 1995) and is associated with the increased salience and centrality of particular identities in emerging adults' identity projects. Taken together with the excerpts from Rose's other interviews we quoted earlier, this comment also suggests that Rose is beginning to appreciate the connections or intersections between her personal and social identities.

**The Intersectionality of Personal and Social Identities.** The connections between individuals' multiple identities have been conceptualized in three ways. As discussed by scholars from critical race theory (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005), feminists of Color (hooks, 2003; Hurtado & Silva,

Chapter Two, this volume), and social scientists interested in multicultural education (Waters, 1996), intersectionality concerns individuals' positioning in their cultural communities and the broader society. Focusing primarily on race and class (critical race theory) and race and gender (feminist studies), these scholars reject a hierarchical, or additive, approach to social identities. Rather, they have emphasized how social identities intersect to create unique positions within society; because these identities all work together to shape experiences, they cannot be understood in isolation. For example, although by virtue of their gender Black and white female students can experience similar gender-related challenges and resources in their career pathways, their experiences will be inherently unique because their ethnicity puts them in either a subordinate or dominant position at the university and in society. In this example, Black female students potentially experience two intersecting systems of oppression (gender and race), and white females potentially experience only one system of oppression (gender).

All of the chapter authors address this structural conceptualization of intersectionality to some degree. Hurtado and Silva, for example, illustrate how the creators of the *Little Bill* TV series interweave positive messages about ethnicity, gender, disability, and to an extent, social class, in their episode "A Ramp for Monty." In their discussion of gender identity development, Lurye, Zosuls, and Ruble and Brown and Tappan illustrate the importance of considering the complex interconnections among sex typing, centrality, typicality, and power for understanding not only gender identity development but also the association between gender identity and mental health. Intersectionality is also illustrated by Way, Santos, Niwa, and Kim-Gervey in their analyses of how late adolescents create connections among ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, and other social identities in the context of their high school, and in Orbe's discussion of how ethnic majority and minority poor and working-class first-generation college students negotiate the dialectical tensions between their peer interactions in their university and home communities.

The second sense of how intersectionality has been conceptualized in the literature is akin to Erikson's (1968) ideas about the importance of coherence for identity development. In this framing, intersectionality refers to the integration (or nonintegration) of individuals' multiple selves, relationships, and worlds (see, for example, Cooper, 1999; Harter, 1999). This approach to intersectionality is illustrated particularly well in Orbe's discussion of how first-generation college students negotiate the dialectical tension between the identities they perform with family and friends in their home communities and the upwardly mobile identities they perform with peers and professors at the university.

Within developmental psychology, the third and final approach to intersectionality concerns statistical interactions between age and personal and social identities. For example, as Hurtado and Silva noted, research on per-

sonal and social identity development has consistently highlighted the role of cognitive skills in the complexity of children, adolescents, and emerging adults' personal and social identities and their ability. Lurye, Zosuls, and Ruble convincingly show how the nature of the statistical interaction of sex typing, gender identity, and adjustment differs in early and late middle childhood.

*Intersectionality in Emerging Adulthood: Evidence from Our Longitudinal Study.* The most striking finding from our longitudinal analysis of our participants' identity narratives was their increasing ability to articulate the connections among their multiple identities. Typically during their first year, participants discussed the domains of personal and social identity we studied in relative isolation even when prompted by interview questions to discuss the connections between them. Such was not the case in their senior-year interviews, when most spontaneously made these connections. For example, during her first-year interviews, Rose denied that her ethnicity, gender, or social class played a role in her life. In contrast, during her senior-year interview, she frequently discussed the intersection between her ethnic and gender identities. She told us repeatedly that being a Chinese female was a source of challenge in her family and that this challenge affected her ability to focus on her major and career. She narrated several experiences to support her views, such as when her brother received a "full ride" to college from her parents but she had to work to help pay for her own tuition and living expenses. However, Rose's narratives did not articulate a very sophisticated view about how these social identities contextualized her career identity or her position in the larger society. She also viewed identity largely as a personal project and not as a something that affects the groups she identified with.

In contrast, in her senior-year interview, Ana made more complex connections among her experiences, social identities, and her career choices (a domain of personal identity). She believed her gender would be a challenge because law is male dominated, but that her ethnicity would be an asset because of the perceived need for diversity in the judicial system. An examination of Ana's first- through senior-year interviews showed that trying to make sense of experiences of racism and discrimination increased her understanding of the intersections between her social identities. At the beginning of her first year of college, she distanced herself from others in her ethnic group when she described her parents' support of her attending college: "I'm going to college. I'm trying harder. In my culture that's good, because people usually settle for less. And I think that's helped me because I don't settle for less." In her sophomore year, Ana aligned herself with her ethnic group and began to see the intersection of ethnicity and social class after an experience of prejudice in which a middle-class white acquaintance accused Ana's Latina friend of "spending my parents' tax money on your digital camera" because Ana's friend had used part of her financial aid to pay for the camera. Ana expressed her frustration in the conflation of class and race that permeates our society, her understanding that others might

perceive her differently because of her social class, and her resolve to prove these stereotypes wrong. This experience did not affect “how I view myself, but I guess how other people might view me. Because of however much your parents make.” Moments later when asked about which social identity was most salient and central to her, she said ethnicity, “because people are always classifying people by what you are.”

Ana’s more complex understanding of the intersections between class and ethnicity included the realization that her social class was viewed as a stereotype of her ethnicity and therefore made her ethnicity more salient to others. This was a common sentiment among the participants regarding the intersection of class and ethnicity: the working-class Asian American and white emerging adult participants stated that they were often viewed as middle class, whereas the Latino and African American participants stated that others frequently assumed they were from poor or working-class backgrounds. Ana’s narrative also reflects the challenges of creating intersections between one’s identities and the ambivalence that can result from this process. Although Ana recognized that her ethnicity and social class identities were inherently connected, she still wished that society would not conflate ethnicity and social class.

Our emerging adult participants’ understanding of their social and personal identities and the intersections between them was also mediated by their personal agency in seeking out experiences of diversity. For example, Leslie, a white working-class female who viewed social class as her most salient social identity, actively sought out experiences that would broaden her appreciation of and tolerance for diversity. As illustrated by her narrative of an experience in her legal studies class when they discussed *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, these experiences allowed her to begin to articulate the intersection of her identities. In the lead-in narrative to the following quotation, she stated that her predominantly white home community and high school were isolated from, and unconcerned with, the experiences of discrimination such as busing that affect different racial groups. However, since coming to college, she came to recognize that “you really have to work to put yourself in the other’s situation or to understand something outside of where you come from . . . because it takes a lot for you to understand that life might be different. . . . I think I try to understand what life is like for other people. I think I’m pretty concerned with everyone having equal opportunity.”

Like Ana and Rose, in her senior-year interview Leslie suggested that all three social identities were related; however, she still struggled to articulate the interconnections among them, suggesting that while college provides many opportunities for identity development, emerging adults have not yet completed their identity projects. Often it was in their narratives about their daily life experiences, not in their discussions about their current and future career pathways, that participants articulated most clearly and spontaneously the intersections between their personal and social identities.

## Conclusion

In sum, although we found a general pattern of increasing integration and sophistication in how emerging adults understand and speak about their career, ethnicity, gender, and social class identities, there was great variability in the timing, sequence, and degree of understanding that they showed. This variability is due in part to the vast array of experiences that influence their identity development, the salience and centrality of their various identities, and the strategies and other psychological work that they use to make meaning of these experiences. The emerging adult participants also varied in their articulation of connections among their multiple identities and whether the intersection of personal and social identities was tied to specific experiences or placed in the broader context of society.

Clearly emerging adulthood is a developmental period characterized by continued identity negotiations. Indeed, we agree with Erikson's original conceptualizations of identity as a lifelong developmental project. As illustrated by the six chapters that follow, this identity project begins in childhood, and although emerging adults often have made much headway in their personal and social identity constructions, their identity projects are far from complete and will likely be revisited as they move through the new roles, relationships, and developmental periods of their lives.

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